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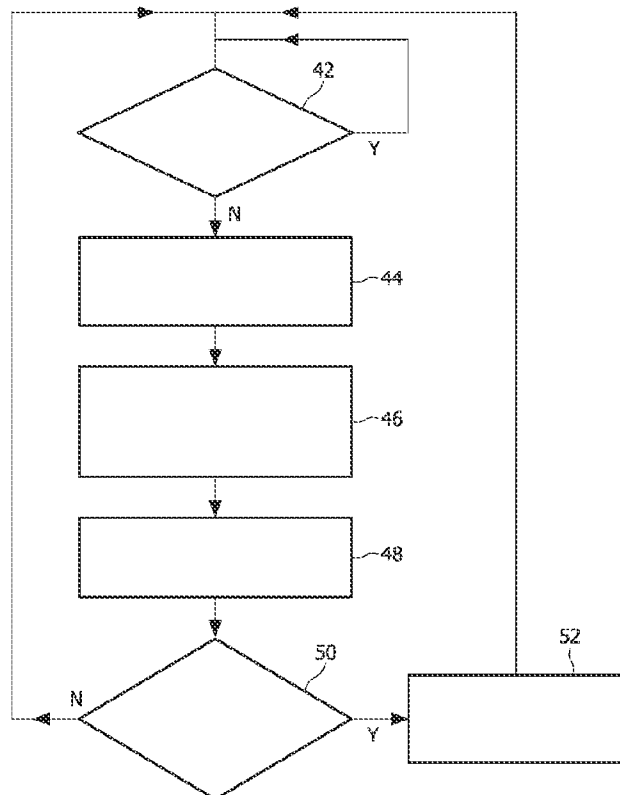
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(54) Title: REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM A BASE STATION TO SEND PACKETS QUEUED AT A MOBILE STATION ACCORDING TO ITS TRANSMISSION DELAY



(57) Abstract: A method of operating a communications system which comprises a communication station (UE) and a further station (BS), the stations having means (26, 10) whereby they can communicate with each other, and the communication station having buffer memory means (BUF1 to BUF_n) for storing data units in at least one queue. One of the stations (UE, BS) has means (36) for estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the at least one queue, and means (30) responsive to the estimated transmission delay exceeding a threshold value for requesting permission from the further station (BS) to enable the communication station (UE) to transmit at least one data unit to the further station (BS). The further station (i.e. the base station) will either "grant" the permission (in the form of an acceptance of using a certain rate, to transmit to a certain power level, or to transmit for a certain period of time).



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DESCRIPTION

REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM A BASE STATION TO SEND PACKETS QUEUED AT A MOBILE STATION ACCORDING TO ITS TRANSMISSION DELAY.

5 The present invention relates to a method of operating a communication station, a method of operating a communication system, a communication station and a communication system. The present invention has particular, but not exclusive, application to packet communication systems, especially mobile systems such as UMTS.

10

For the sake of convenience the present invention will be described with reference to UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunication System). However the present invention is applicable to other data unit or data packet communication systems.

15

The state of the art is described in input documents to 3GPP (Third Generation Partnership Project), particularly in relation to the Enhanced Uplink, otherwise known as High-Speed Uplink Packet Access (HSUPA). In the HSUPA feature of UMTS, a mechanism is required to enable a base station (BS) to prioritise effectively the allocation of uplink transmission

20 resources between User Equipments (UEs).

Data for transmission from a UE to a BS is typically queued in buffers until it can be transmitted. A UE may have data units to transmit from a number of different streams, each with a different quality of service (QoS) delay target. Each stream may be assigned a different priority level, so that

25 any queued data in the highest-priority stream is transmitted first. Data with different priorities may be buffered in different queues.

In order to transmit some data, the UE has to receive permission from the BS, typically in the form of a "grant" to use certain transmission resources for example a grant to transmit up to a certain rate, to transmit up to a certain

30 power level, or to transmit for a certain period of time.

The BS needs information to enable it to decide which UEs should be granted permission to transmit, and at what rate, and in particular to be able to

prioritise different UEs. To assist in this process, it is known for the UE to transmit requests for permission, and for the UE to transmit an indication of the amount of data in its buffers. Some prioritisation methods which the BS may use involve prioritising the UEs with the greatest amount of data in their buffers, or the UEs with the fullest buffers. However such methods will not necessarily achieve a good quality of service.

An object of the present invention is to improve the scheduling of the transmission of data units.

10 According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a method of operating a communication station, the method comprising queuing data units, estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the queue, and, if the estimated transmission delay exceeds a threshold, requesting permission to transmit at least one data unit.

15 According to a second aspect of the invention there is provided a method of operating a communication system, comprising operating a communication station according to the first aspect of the invention and, at a further station, in response to receiving the request for permission to transmit, scheduling transmission of a data unit by the communication station.

20 According to a third aspect of the invention there is provided a communication station comprising means for communication, buffer memory means for storing data units in at least one queue, means for estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the at least one queue, and means responsive to the estimated transmission delay exceeding a threshold value for requesting permission to transmit at least one data unit.

25 According to a fourth aspect of the invention there is provided a communication system comprising a communication station and a further station, the stations having communications means whereby they can communicate with each other, the communication station having buffer memory means for storing data units in at least one queue, one of the stations having means for estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the at least one queue, and means responsive to the estimated

transmission delay exceeding a threshold value for requesting permission from the further station to enable the communication station to transmit at least one data unit to the further station.

The method in accordance with the present invention enables the further station, which may comprise a base station, to take into account the likelihood of breaching any of a number of quality of service targets for different services and to allocate resources accordingly.

One possible metric for the prioritisation mechanism is to enable the required QoS (delay target) to be achieved for as many communication stations (or UEs) as possible, or for the most critical services. To achieve this target, the BS needs each UE to signal suitable information to enable it to work out what resources the UE would need if it were to avoid breaching any of its QoS targets.

The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a block schematic diagram of a communication system, and

Figure 2 is a flow chart relating to one method of implementing the method in accordance with the present invention.

20

The communication system shown in Figure 1 comprises at least one base station BS and a plurality of User Equipments UE1, UE2 and UE3 geographically distributed within the radio coverage area of the base station(s). The UEs may be fixed or transportable, for example hand portable or mobile. As the UEs have substantially the same architecture only UE1 will be described in detail later.

The BS comprises a radio transceiver 10 coupled to an antenna 12 for propagating and receiving signals from the UEs. The transceiver 10 is coupled to a processor 14 which operates in accordance with software stored in a ROM (not shown). A scheduler 16 is coupled to the processor 14 and serves to schedule the transmission of data units by respective ones of the UEs. Data units received by the BS are stored in a buffer store comprising a RAM 18.

Also connected to the processor 14 are a time delay estimating stage 20 and a store 22 for storing QoS time delay targets for the or each buffer in a UE. Optionally the BS may include a stage 24 for estimating the arrival rate of data. For the sake of clarity some of the stages of the BS have been shown
5 separately but they may be formed integrally with the processor 14 or created by the processor 14 in accordance with pre-stored software.

The UE1 comprises a radio transceiver 26 coupled to an antenna 28 for propagating and receiving signals from the BS. The transceiver 26 is coupled to a processor 30 which operates in accordance with software stored in a ROM
10 (not shown). One or a plurality of data unit buffer stores BUF1, BUF2, BUF_n are coupled to the processor 30 and in operation it or they store, in queues, data units supplied to the UE or generated by an application via an interface 32. The buffer stores may be organized so that the queues have different levels of priority. Also connected to the processor are a timer 34, an
15 estimating stage 36 for determining the time a data unit has been stored or will be stored in a buffer store and estimating the transmission rate for the data in a buffer store, and a QoS time delay register 38 for storing the quality of service time delays for the or the respective buffer stores BUF1, BUF2, BUF_n. Optionally the UE1 may include a scheduler 40 shown in broken lines. For the
20 sake of clarity some of the stages of the UE1 have been shown separately but they may be formed integrally with the processor 30 or created by the processor 30 in accordance with pre-stored software.

In implementing the method in accordance with the present invention the UE estimates, in the processor 30, the total transmission delay for each
25 unit of data, for example a packet, in the or each of the UE's buffer store. The total estimated transmission delay is the length of time the data has been in the buffer and/or the further estimated length of time before the data will be successfully transmitted. If the total estimated transmission delay exceeds a delay target or QoS the UE signals, by means of the processor 30, to the BS
30 an indication that some data in its buffer is close to reaching its delay target.

The method is summarised by the flow chart shown in Figure 2. In block 42 a check is made to see if there are no data units in the buffer stores

of a UE waiting to be despatched. If the answer is Yes (Y) then the flow chart reverts to the input of the block 42. However if the answer is No (N) and there are data units in the buffer stores then in block 44 the data rate is estimated. In block 44 the transmission time for each data unit in a queue is estimated at
5 the current data rate. In block 48 the delay is estimated for each data unit in the queue. In block 50 a check is made to see if the worse case delay exceeds a threshold delay, for example a QoS time delay, and if it does (Y) a request is made for resource to be scheduled by the BS. The request may include an indication of the status of the data unit, such as an indication that a
10 delay target is likely to be breached. If the threshold delay is not exceeded (N) the flow chart reverts to the block 42.

The BS in response to the request for resource checks the demand for resource on the uplink and, if possible, schedules the transmission of the data unit. This information is transmitted on a downlink to the requesting UE.

15 This signalling of a request for resource by the UE to the BS could potentially be triggered by any of a number of events, for example:

- a) a unit of data has been in the UE's buffer for more than a predetermined length of time;
- b) the remaining time before the delay target for a particular unit of data is
20 breached is less than a predetermined length of time; and/or
- c) the fraction of the delay target that has elapsed for a particular data unit since arriving in the UE's buffer has exceeded a predetermined value.

In a variant of the method in accordance with the present invention, the UE could estimate and signal to the BS the additional length of time that is
25 predicted to elapse before a given data unit is transmitted. This can be derived from the following two pieces of information:

- a) the total of the amount of data ahead of the given data unit in its priority queue and the data in all queues of higher priority than the given data unit, and
- 30 b) some prediction of the data rate.

The prediction of the data rate could be, for example, that the data rate is

- a) equal to the most recently granted data rate;
- b) equal to the most recently used data rate;
- c) an average of the recently granted data rates; or
- d) an average of the recently used data rates.

5 A further variation of this embodiment could entail the UE taking into account the rate of arrival of data in the higher-priority queues. For example, if the amount of data in the higher-priority queues and ahead of the given data unit in its own priority queue is D , the predicted transmission rate is R and the predicted arrival rate in the higher priority queues is r , then the estimated time
10 remaining before transmission of the data unit in question is given by $D/(R-r)$.

 As a further enhancement of the method in accordance with the present invention, the UE can estimate the size of the additional transmission grant that it would need in order to transmit a data unit before it fails to meet its QoS target.

15 For example, if the remaining time before the QoS target is breached is T , then the additional rate R_A that the UE requires could be estimated as $D/T + r - R$.

 Thus a fourth potential trigger for the UE signalling a request for resource to the BS could be that the current or average granted transmission
20 rate is less than, or within a predetermined margin of, the rate required for any, that is at least one, data unit in its buffers to meet its QoS target.

 The UE could perform the necessary calculations for each data unit in its buffers, and transmit the necessary signalling when one of the potential triggers occurred for any of the data units. It may be sufficient to do the
25 calculation only for the data unit most recently added to a queue.

 Information pertaining to the potential triggers could be signalled to the UE, for example, information relating to any of the predetermined lengths of time, values or margins.

 The BS could also instruct individual UEs or groups of UEs to switch
30 their signalling on or off.

 In a further embodiment of the invention, a predetermined proportion of the data units in a priority queue, or group of priority queues, could be

permitted to fail their QoS target. For example, the calculations described above could be performed on the basis that the granted transmission rate needs to be such that 95% of the data units in a given priority queue will satisfy their QoS targets. The UE could perform the described signalling only if
5 this criterion was predicted to fail over some predetermined period of time, i.e. over an averaging period.

The UE may be informed of the delay target by the BS or network if there are two or more BSs controlled by a central controller.

The UE may have more than one queue with different QoS targets. It
10 may use the information that one or more QoS targets is about to be breached in order to modify the scheduling of transmission of data units from each queue. For example, if the queues have priorities assigned to them, then these priorities could be modified by the UE in order to better meet QoS targets.

15 In yet a further variation of the method in accordance with the present invention, the calculations of required rate could be performed entirely at the BS. The UE could signal the elapsed delay for a data unit, together with the amount of data ahead of it in the queues, with or without information regarding the arrival rate of data in the higher-priority queues. In some embodiments an
20 estimate of the latter information may be determined by the BS using the stage 24 to examine the received data rate on each priority level.

The BS may also need suitable information to determine its prioritisation of UEs even if none of them is about to fail a QoS target. Consequently, the signalling provided by implementing the method in accordance with the
25 present invention could be additional to some basic signalling regarding the amount of data to transmit. Further, it is necessary to allow the possibility to give transmission permission to UEs which have only low-priority data with no QoS target, for example a file transfer.

Optionally the method in accordance with the present invention may
30 include one or more of the following additional features:

- a) It may be desirable to include other delays in deciding on the QoS, for example any known processing delays before data arrives in the queue, or any known transmission delays in the radio system.
- b) If the queue contains data units, then the information within a data unit
5 could have been generated at different times, which implies a different delay requirement. One approach would be to consider timing based on the oldest data in a data unit.
- c) Other actions could be taken if the QoS criterion is not met, or predicted not to be met. For example data units could be discarded, which could
10 help ensure that subsequent data can be delivered in time. Another possibility is that a connection or service could be dropped if the QoS is not achieved, or is not achievable). This would allow resources to be diverted to other users.

In further variant of the method in accordance with the present
15 invention, the UEs are able to listen to each other's transmissions and determine which ones have data units which are likely to miss their QoS targets unless transmitted promptly. The UEs include a scheduler 40, (shown in broken lines in Figure 1) by which a UE wishing to prioritise the sending of a data unit can schedule its despatch. The processor 30 generates a system
20 wide message informing the BS and the other UEs of the planned despatch of the data unit.

In the present specification and claims the word "a" or "an" preceding an element does not exclude the presence of a plurality of such elements. Further, the word "comprising" does not exclude the presence of other elements or steps
25 than those listed. The inclusion of reference numerals in the claims is not intended to be limiting.

From reading the present disclosure, other modifications will be apparent to persons skilled in the art. Such modifications may involve other features which are already known in the design, manufacture and use of
30 communication systems and component parts therefor and which may be used instead of or in addition to features already described herein.

CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a communication station (UE1), the method comprising queuing data units, estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the queue, and, if the estimated transmission delay exceeds a threshold, requesting permission to transmit at least one data unit.
5
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the threshold is exceeded by a data unit being in the queue for more than a predetermined length of time.
10
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the threshold is exceeded by the remaining time before a delay target for a particular data unit is breached being less than a predetermined length of time.
15
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the threshold is exceeded by a fraction of a delay target that has elapsed for a particular data unit since arriving in the queue having exceeded a predetermined value.
20
5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the threshold is exceeded by the current or average granted transmission rate being less than, or within a predetermined margin of, the rate required for at least one data unit in the queue to meet a quality of service target.
25
6. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the transmission delay is estimated only for the data unit most recently added to the queue.
7. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the transmission delay is estimated on the basis of the oldest data in a data unit.
30

8. A method as claimed in claim 1, comprising estimating the additional length of time that is predicted to elapse before a given data unit is transmitted and signalling this estimate.

5 9. A method as claimed in claim 8, comprising estimating the additional length of time on the basis of the total of the amount of data ahead of the given data unit in its queue and the data in all queues of higher priority than the given data unit, and a prediction of the data rate.

10 10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the prediction of the data rate is based on the data rate being one of the following:

- (a) equal to the most recently granted data rate;
- (b) equal to the most recently used data rate;
- (c) an average of the recently granted data rates; or
- 15 (d) an average of the recently used data rates.

11. A method as claimed in claim 1, comprising queuing data units in at least two queues having different delay targets, and, in response to information that one of the delay targets is about to be breached, modifying the
20 scheduling of transmission of data units from each of the at least two queues.

12. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11, comprising receiving an indication of the threshold.

25 13. A method of operating a communication system, comprising operating a communication station (UE1) according to any one of claims 1 to 12 and, at a further station (BS), in response to receiving the request for permission to transmit, scheduling transmission of a data unit by the communication station (UE1).

30 14. A method as claimed in claim 13, further comprising operating the communication station (UE1) according to any one of claims 8, 9 or 10,

and at the further station (BS), in response to receiving the estimate of additional length of time that is predicted to elapse before a given data unit is transmitted, determining a data rate for use by the communication station (UE1) when transmitting the data unit.

5

15. A method as claimed in claim 13, further comprising operating the communication station (UE1) according to claim 12, and at the further station (BS) transmitting the indication of the threshold.

10 16. A communication station (UE1) comprising means (26) for communication, buffer memory means (BUF1 to BUF_n) for storing data units in at least one queue, means (36) for estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the at least one queue, and means (30) responsive to the estimated transmission delay exceeding a threshold value
15 for requesting permission to transmit at least one data unit.

17. A communication station (UE1) as claimed in claim 16, wherein the buffer memory means (BUF1 to BUF_n) is adapted to queue data units in at least two queues having different delay targets, and, further comprising
20 scheduling means (40) responsive to information that one of the delay targets is about to be breached for modifying the scheduling of transmission of data units from each of the at least two queues.

18. A communication station (UE1) as claimed in claim 16 or 17,
25 wherein the means (26) for communication is adapted to receive an indication of the threshold value.

19. A communication system comprising a communication station (UE1) and a further station (BS), the stations having communication means
30 (26, 10) whereby they can communicate with each other, the communication station (UE1) having buffer memory means (BUF1 to BUF_n) for storing data units in at least one queue, one of the stations (UE1, BS) having means (36,

20) for estimating the transmission delay of at least one of the data units in the at least one queue, and means (30, 14) responsive to the estimated transmission delay exceeding a threshold value for requesting permission from the further station (BS) to enable the communication station (UE1) to transmit
5 at least one data unit to the further station (BS).

20. A communication system as claimed in claim 19, wherein the communication means (26, 10) is adapted to transmit an indication of the threshold value from the further station (BS) to the communication station
10 (UE1).

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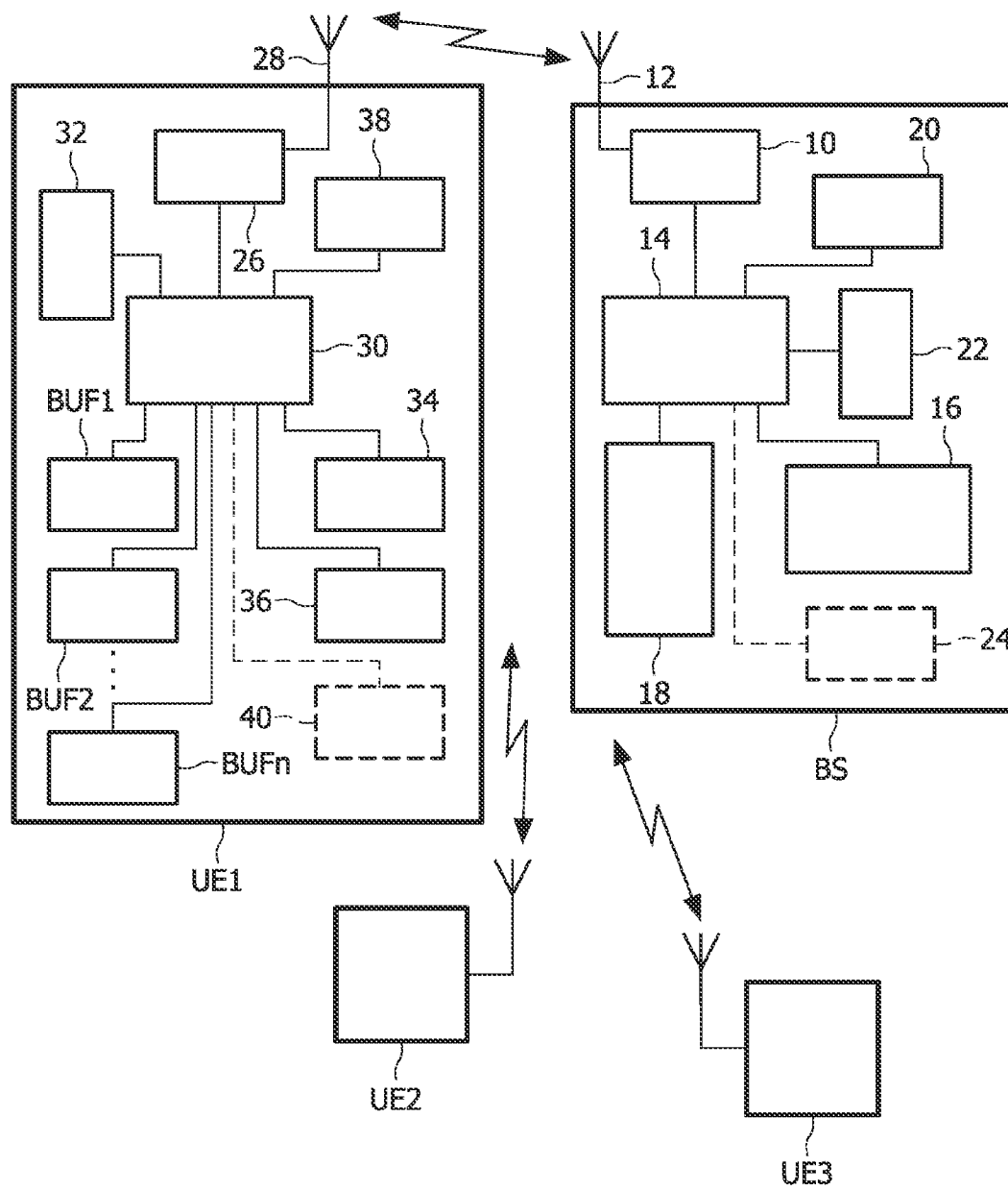


FIG. 1

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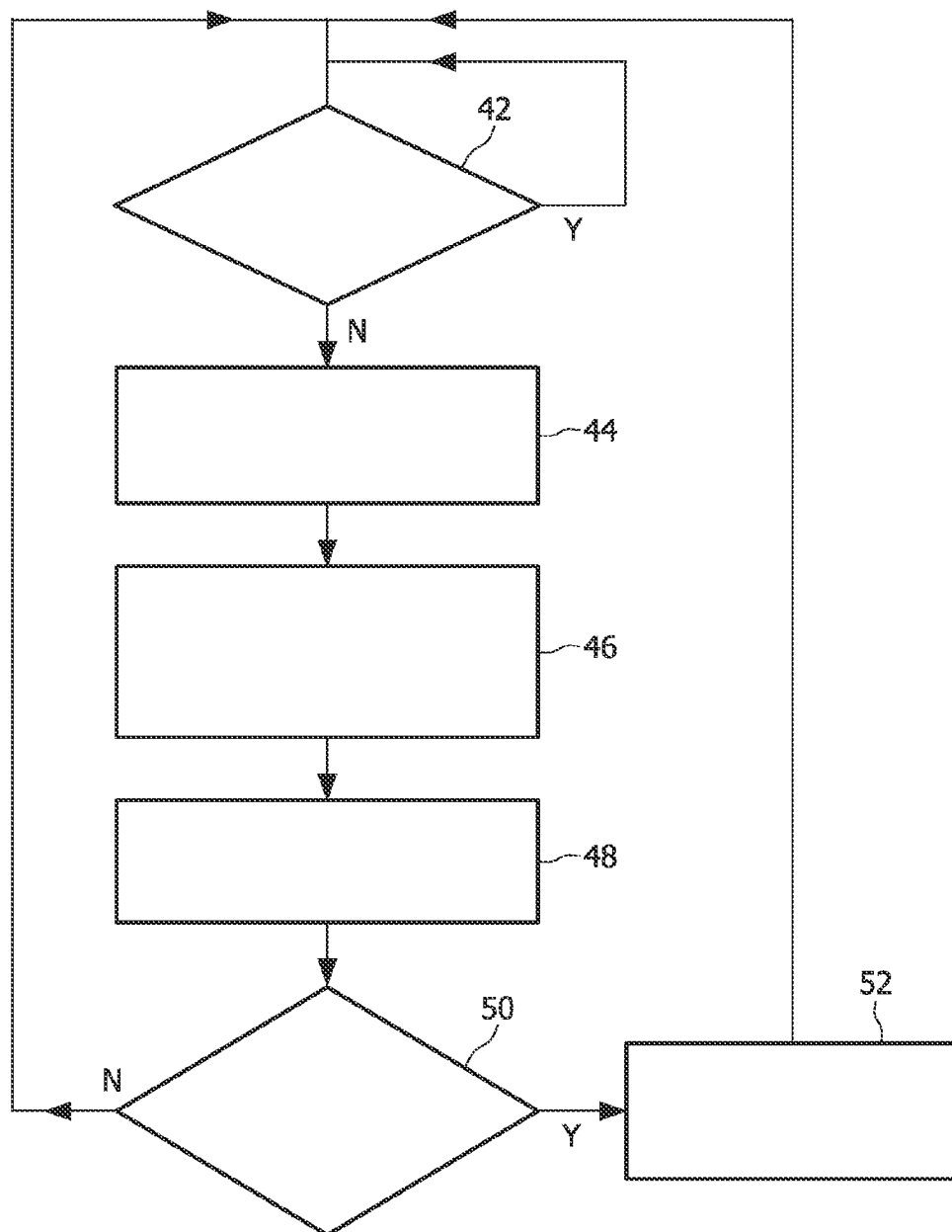


FIG. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/IB2006/050090A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. H04L12/56

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H04L H04Q

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

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C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

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